Income tax refunds

4723. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any system in the Ministry of Finance to issue income tax refunds in a time-bound manner;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what kind of modern tax administration the Ministry is thinking of introducing in the country for a hassle-free tax returns and other services;

(d) whether the Ministry is thinking of engaging private agencies in process of tax returns, etc.; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As per the provisions of the I-T. Act, the refunds are required to be issued before the expiry of one year from the end of the financial year in which the return is made. However, the Department has taken certain initiatives for granting refund within a period of 4 months from the date of filing of return.

(c) The Government has initiated a number of reforms in the area of tax administration as already announced by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech. Such measures include outsourcing of activities relating to allotment of PAN, creation of data bank of high value transactions, computerised selection of cases for scrutiny, extension of interactive voice response system, software for preparation of returns, electronic clearance system for refunds, introduction of a one-page return form for individual tax payers, electronic filing of returns, reduction in the number of forms, abolition of tax-clearance certificates etc.

(d) and (e) In view of heavy load of work, the Chief Commissioners of Income Tax have been authorized to outsource the work relating to digitization of data from income tax returns, to the extent found necessary.

Loan received from foreign countries

†4724. SHRI ABHAY KANT PRASAD : Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the amount of loan obtained by Government from various countries as on March 31, 2003, country-wise;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.